

**WHAT BAPTISTS BELIEVE;
THE NEW
HAMPSHIRE CONFESSION,
AN EXPOSITION**

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What Baptists Believe; The New Hampshire Confession, an Exposition by O. C. S. Wallace

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O. C. S. WALLACE

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The New Hampshire Confession
An Exposition

"I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.—1 Cor. 15:3, 4.

O. C. S. WALLACE, D.D., LL.D.

Pastor First Baptist Church
Baltimore, U. S. A.

PRICE, 50 CENTS, PREPAID

Sunday School Board
Southern Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tennessee

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DEDICATED
to
JAMES P. BOYCE, First President
Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
and to
B. H. CARROLL, First President
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
MIGHTY MEN
In the Kingdom of Christian Teaching

PREFACE

This book is for the use of young people. Its eighteen chapters may be regarded as extended paraphrases of the eighteen articles of the New Hampshire Confession of Faith.

There are many repetitions. These are connected with those fundamental truths which relate themselves closely to several of the articles. For this reason, and because the whole purpose here is to teach, and repetition is necessary in teaching, there has been no attempt to avoid repetition.

Each chapter is divided into numbered sections, and at the close of the chapter there are questions corresponding to these sections. Those who wish to study the Scriptures upon which the declarations of the New Hampshire Confession are based will find them indicated in connection with the several articles. These articles are printed before the corresponding chapters.

This Confession was chosen for the present purpose because it is the formula of Christian truth most commonly used as a standard in Baptist churches throughout the country, to express what they believe according to the Scriptures. It has been adopted, too, within the last few years, with the modification of a single word, by the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at Fort Worth, Texas, as a suitable expression of its doctrinal character and life. For helpful comparison and study an Appendix is added which presents "Abstract of Principles of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary" at Louisville, Ky.

It is only just to say, however, that these great creedal statements of Christian faith, notwithstanding their essential agreement and conspicuous use, would not be quoted singly or jointly as exercising authority over the belief of anyone. Yet in an eminent and almost commanding way they represent the things which are most surely believed among a great people, who recognize the Scriptures alone as the one supreme standard of religious belief and practice.

THE PASTOR'S STUDY,
THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
Baltimore, March, 1913.

O. C. S. WALLACE.

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HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

In 1853 J. Newton Brown, then editorial secretary of the American Baptist Publication Society, published "The Baptist Church Manual," incorporating in it the declaration of principles commonly called "The New Hampshire Confession." In the advertisement of his Manual, Brown claims the authorship of this Declaration of Faith. This claim is not fully supported by the history, though he may have honestly thought that his part in the production of "The Confession" was greater than others might be willing to concede.

In the last part of the eighteenth century there were revivals in many churches in different parts of New England. With the opening of the nineteenth century the revival spirit continued and extended more widely. In the Congregational churches there was great doctrinal unrest, resulting in the separation early in the century of the Unitarians from the Trinitarians. It was in 1805 that Henry Ware was appointed to the Hollis Professorship of divinity in Harvard University. This was a distinct victory for the Unitarian propagandists, and roused the Evangelicals to new aggressiveness and a greater emphasis upon evangelical doctrines.

These two currents, one evangelistic and the other doctrinal, united to form a stream of religious life of deep fervor and of pronounced convictions in respect to New Testament truth. As a result, in localities where settlers were establishing new communities and in older communities where spiritual awakening was enlarging the number of believers, there developed a tendency to give formal expression to the things which were commonly believed. Some Baptist churches were content to adopt "The Philadelphia Confession," others, "The London Confession," and still others, the confession of some individual church; but in other instances new declarations were prepared. In the Eastern Maine Association, for example, a document notable for its comprehensiveness, pun-

gency and literary form was printed in 1825 as the declaration of faith of that Association. This declaration was in fact an approximation to a primer of Christian divinity. Besides this there were other Confessions which many would regard as not inferior to the New Hampshire Confession. How the New Hampshire Confession came to be more widely adopted than any other is an interesting story.

In the Minutes of the New Hampshire Convention of 1830 we find this record:

“Whereas the Baptist denomination of Christians are believed to be united in their views of the important and essential doctrines and practices of our holy religion, (although their declarations of faith are not in precisely the same language as it is desirable that they should be,) therefore

Resolved, that brethren N. W. Williams, William Taylor and I. Person be a committee to prepare and present at our next annual session such a Declaration of Faith and Practice, together with a Covenant, as may be thought agreeable and consistent with the views of all our churches in this state.”

The last words of this resolution are significant. For about half a century Arminian views had been vigorously taught in New Hampshire. The influence of this teaching had greatly modified the earlier New England Calvinism even where Arminianism was still rejected. With this fact in mind the non-committal character of certain parts of the Declaration finally adopted by the New Hampshire Convention can be understood.

The committee consisting of N. W. Williams, William Taylor and I. Person, appointed in 1830, reported progress at the Convention in 1831, but stated that it had not been able to complete its work; and requested that the committee be discharged. This request was granted; but one member of the committee, the Rev. Ira Person, was appointed to continue the work undertaken by the committee. This Ira Person seems to have been a man of little education, but of vigorous mind and strong personality. He was the pastor in 1830 of the church in Newport, which that year reported two hundred

and thirty-three members, being the second in membership in the state. In 1830 he was the first Vice-President of the Convention, and soon after served as President. The records indicate that he was one of the strongest leaders of the denomination in New Hampshire in that period.

At the meeting of the convention June 26, 1832, Person made his report. The heading of his draft was,

"A Declaration of the views of Christian Doctrine of the Baptist Church of Christ

in

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This title indicates that Person intended that the Declaration prepared under the direction of the Convention should not be binding upon the churches, but suggestive only; and that it should be offered to individual churches for their approval and adoption at will.

Person's draft, the original of which is still in existence, consisted of seven articles. An exact copy of this original, made by the Rev. Arthur Warren Smith, the accomplished librarian of the New England Baptist Library, may be seen now at the Ford Building, Boston.

By vote of the Convention Person's report was accepted, and was referred to a committee consisting of Baron Stow, J. Newton Brown, and Jonathan Going, with its author. It is likely that the three who were associated with Person on this committee were selected because they were men of education. That committee reported in favor of adopting the Articles as prepared by Person, with some slight alterations; but after discussion action was deferred, and the Convention as such did not again deal with the Confession.

The Board of the Convention to which the Articles were referred for such disposal as it might think wise, referred the document to Baron Stow and J. Newton Brown for revision and presentation at the next meeting of the Board. At its meeting in October, 1832, the Board discussed each Article with great care, making alterations and additions.